

Message Text

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13

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO DEA HQS WASHDC

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0606

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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FOR DEA ANKARA; HQS FOR YATES, ACT EOI

STATE FOR LAWRENCE - S/NM, PECK, NEA/PAB FROM SAIC PETTIT

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: SNAR, AF

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF CANNABIS SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: DEA LOU 9328

1. PRODUCTION: THERE HAS NEVER BEEN AN ACTUAL SURVEY OF CULTIVATION. THE MOST PREVALENT ESTIMATE IS THAT CANNABIS PRODUCTION IS PROBABLY FROM TWO TO THREE TIMES MORE THAN THAT OF OPIUM. THE MOST WIDELY ACCEPTED ESTIMATE OF OPIUM PRODUCTION IS FROM 200 TO 400 TONS ANNUALLY. THUS, IT MIGHT BE ESTIMATED THAT A MINIMUM OF 400 TONS OF UNREFINED CANNABIS ARE PRODUCED YEARLY IN AFGHANISTAN.

CANNABIS GROWS READILY IN MOST AREAS OF THE COUNTRY. THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT IT IS GROWN FOR ANY REASON OTHER THAN THE EXTRACTION AND EXPORTATION OF THE DRUG.

2. PROCESSING: IT IS BELIEVED THAT MOST AFGHAN CANNABIS IS

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REFINED INTO HASHISH AND EXPORTED IN THAT FORM. IT IS NOT

KNOWN HOW MUCH HASHISH IS REFINED INTO HASHISH OIL. TRADITIONALLY, WESTERN FOREIGNERS HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF HASHISH OIL, HOWEVER, THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE SOME AFGHANS HAVE LEARNED THE PROCESS AND HAVE BECOME DIRECT SOURCES OF SUPPLY. RECENT INVESTIGATIONS AT KABUL REVEAL THAT HASHISH OIL PRODUCERS ARE NOT MAINTAINING STOCKS; BUT ADVISE PROSPECTIVE CUSTOMERS THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO PURCHASE THE RAW MATERIALS AND COMPLETE THE PROCESS PRIOR TO DELIVERY. IT HAS ALSO BEEN LEARNED THAT PROCESSORS ARE EXPERIENCING GREAT DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING ALCOHOL AND SOLICIT PROSPECTIVE BUYERS FOR THE CHEMICAL.

3. TRAFFICKING: IT IS GENERALLY ASSUMED THAT CANNABIS IS MOVED BY THE SAME GROUPS OF PERSONS INVOLVED IN THE OPIUM TRAFFIC, AND ALONG SOME OF THE MAJOR ROUTES. SINCE THE JULY 1973 COUP, MANY MAJOR TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN DISRUPTED OR BECOME DEFUNCT. LARGE CONSIGNMENTS ARE AVOIDED IN FAVOR OF INDIVIDUAL COURIERS WITH SMALL LOTS, THUS MINIMIZING THE RISKS OF DETECTION AND LARGE LOSSES. A RECENT INVESTIGATION IN ONE OF THE MAJOR PRODUCTION AREAS INDICATED THAT NO SINGLE PERSON CONTROLS SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF HASHISH; RATHER, THE PROSPECTIVE BUYER MUST EITHER HIRE A LOCAL JOBBER OR MAKE THE MANY SMALL COLLECTIONS HIMSELF. SO FAR AS IS PRECISELY KNOWN, FEW IF ANY HASHISH OIL LABORATORIES ARE OPERATING IN KABUL ITSELF. NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN TRAFFICKERS AND BUYERS ARE CONDUCTED IN KABUL WITH PROCESSING AND FINAL DELIVERY TAKING PLACE IN RURAL AREAS. RETAILING OF RELATIVELY SMALL QUANTITIES TO WESTERN NATIONALS IN KABUL CONTINUES BUT HAS BECOME FAR MORE FURTIVE AND CLANDESTINE DUE TO INCREASED ENFORCEMENT PRESSURES IN KABUL. INTENSIFIED SUPPRESSION ACTIVITIES AT KABUL'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE FORCED MOST FOREIGN COURIERS AND TRAFFICKERS TO MOVE OVERLAND BY PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLES.

4. ABUSE PATTERNS: IT IS BELIEVED THAT NEARLY ALL CANNABIS PRODUCTS PRODUCED HERE ARE EXPORTED TO THE WEST. THERE HAVE BEEN NO INDICATIONS OF SIGNIFICANT ABUSE BY THE AFGHANS THEMSELVES.

5. OUTLOOK: IT IS HOPED THAT NEW ENFORCEMENT PRESSURE AGAINST THE OPIUM TRAFFIC AND ALL TYPES OF TRANS-BORDER SMUGGLING WILL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CAUSE THE CANNABIS TRAFFIC TO FALTER. NEWS AMONG THE SUB-CULTURE OF STIFF SENTENCES FOR POSSESSION AND USE IN AFGHANISTAN MAY REDUCE RETAIL DEMAND. CULTIVATORS, NOT PHYSICALLY OR ECONOMICALLY DEPENDENT AS IN THE CASE OF SOME OPIUM GROWERS, MAY THEN FIND THEMSELVES UNABLE TO SELL THIS FALL'S CROP. THEREFORE, WE MIGHT EXPECT TO SEE THE CULTIVATORS WILLING TO SELL FOR LESS; WHILE THE RETAILERS, SENSING THE TREND, WILL INCREASE PRICES TO INDIVIDUAL CONSUMERS. THESE FACTORS COULD

COMBINE TO HAVE A VERY DISRUPTING INFLUENCE ON THE TRAFFIC.
ENFORCEMENT-WISE THE OUTLOOK IS HOPEFUL SINCE AN ABATEMENT
OF LOW-LEVEL TRAFFICKING WOULD EFFECTIVELY "CLEAR THE DECKS"
AS IT WERE FOR MORE PRODUCTIVE WORK AGAINST MAJOR AFGHAN
VIOLATORS AND THE INTERNATIONAL TRAFFICKERS, WHO CAN BE
EXPECTED TO TIGHTEN UP THEIR SECURITY AND IMPROVE THEIR
METHODS IN ORDER TO STAY IN A PROFITABLE BUSINESS.

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